

# The world press spoke out about Pham Doan Trang's arrest in October 2020

October 8, 2020



PHAM DOAN TRANG

| Dissident journalist Pham Doan Trang (centre) in a meeting with international politicians

**A series of articles in many languages, from many news agencies around the world, simultaneously reported and analyzed the case of dissident journalist Pham Doan Trang who was arrested on October 7 and accused of "propaganda" against the state'.**

With this charge, Pham Doan Trang could face a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.

The arrest of journalist Pham Doan Trang: Initial reactions from international and Vietnamese

Activist Pham Doan Trang was arrested

On October 7, BBC News published an article titled "Pham Doan Trang: Vietnam arrests famous pro-democracy blogger", in which:

"Vietnam has arrested a prominent dissident writer and blogger just hours after holding talks with the United States on human rights."

The US State Department said on its website that the 24th Vietnam-US Human Rights Dialogue was held for three hours on October 6 and "addresses a wide range of human rights issues".

"The promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms remains an important pillar of U.S. foreign policy and a key to further solidifying the Vietnam-China Comprehensive Partnership. Ky."

## **Simultaneously speaking out**

---



Dissident journalist Pham Doan Trang was arrested by the Vietnamese government on the evening of October 6, 2020

On the same day, The Guardian of the UK had an article with the title: "Vietnam arrests famous journalist when the state suppresses freedom of expression online".

Writing that Pham Doan Trang is the author of many books with works on a variety of topics, from women's rights and LGBT to the environment, campaign activities and land rights, the article states analysts' opinions. :

Ms. Trang's arrest is part of a crackdown on activists ahead of Vietnam's national congress in January, while Facebook is facing criticism for growing complicity in the crackdown. press freedom of speech."

British news agency Reuters reported that "Vietnam detained an activist a few hours after a human rights meeting with the US". The bulletin wrote:

Sources and international human rights groups say Vietnam has arrested a blogger and a prominent dissident for "anti-state activities" hours after the country's government held protests. Annual human rights negotiations with the United States...

Bloomberg also quoted a statement from Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director of Human Rights Watch (HRW), saying the arrest came hours after the annual human rights dialogue between the US and Vietnam. .

"Doan Trang's blog covers politically sensitive topics, including the relationship between Vietnam and China and tensions over maritime and island claims," Robertson said. According to Robertson, police arrested Trang in May 2016 when she went to meet President Barack Obama, who invited her to attend an activist gathering with him during his visit to Hanoi.

Aljazeera news agency also reported on the arrest of Pham Doan Trang. The paper portrays her as a celebrity known for her active fieldwork, participating in protests in support of imprisoned dissidents, demonstrating on the environment, and responding to demands. China's navigation in the South China Sea.

Trang has been in the sights of security forces for more than 10 years and has been detained and harassed several times, including when she was on her way to a meeting with then-US President Barack Obama in 2016. , and a year later, when she came into contact with a delegation from the European Union on a fact-finding trip before the annual human rights dialogue with Vietnam," the newspaper wrote.

The Book Seller reports that Ms. Pham Doan Trang is scheduled to speak in a joint session presented by the IPA at the Frankfurt Book Fair and her video speech will be broadcast as planned on October 15. .

In an article titled "Prix Voltaire laureate Pham Doan Trang arrested in Vietnam", The Book Seller quotes Kristenn Einarsson, chair of the IPA's Freedom of Publication committee, as saying: "This is terrible news. but sadly, it was predictable. Pham Doan Trang and Freedom Publishing House have been operating in the dark for many years. Mrs. Trang's work and courage is an inspiration to all publishers. publishing, and the international publishing community must support her and fight for real freedom of publishing in Vietnam."

Juergen Boos, president of Frankfurter Buchmesse, said: "We are very concerned about Pham Doan Trang's arrest, just before the start of the world's largest book fair that celebrates freedom of expression. We are delighted that the international publishing community will be able to listen to Pham Doan Trang in a pre-recorded video at the panel session on the topic 'Guerilla publishing and international support'."

Theshiftnews page quotes Mr. Daniel Bastard, Head of Asia - Pacific Department of Reporters Without Borders (RSW) - which awarded Pham Doan Trang the Press Freedom Award for Influence in 2019: "The arrest case Pham Doan Trang is the latest stage in the current Communist Party leadership's pursuit of an increasingly repressive policy."

"Her only crime was providing her compatriots with independent information and helping them to fully exercise their rights under the Vietnamese constitution. Her place of residence is not a prison. She must be released immediately".

The RSW representative also said that the most recent contact with Pham Doan Trang was when she was hospitalized for treatment of a leg wound that was allegedly caused by police after her arrest in 2018.

Shawn Crispin, Southeast Asia representative of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) , said in an article posted on the organization's website: "The Vietnamese government should immediately release Pham Doan Trang and abolish it. all charges against her. Also end the decades-long campaign of repression against her. Vietnam needs to stop treating independent journalists like criminals."

Vietnam is usually near the bottom of RSW's rankings for press freedom, and currently ranks 174 out of 180 countries.

**'Increased suppression of freedom of speech'**

In the case of Pham Doan Trang's arrest, Yu Hah from Amnesty International told The Guardian that Facebook's decision to comply with Vietnamese authorities' censorship requests earlier this year "made them complicit with the country's harsh suppression of free speech".

"We've seen a steady increase in the moderation of legitimate comments on social and political issues on this platform since 2018, with a particularly strong increase in 2020. "

"Merely sharing information about Vietnam's many serious human rights issues, from land disputes to the death penalty, has now become routine subject to arbitrary censorship on Facebook," said Ms. Yu Hah. speak.



Pham Doan Trang won the Press Freedom Award, Influence category, of Reporters Without Borders, 2019

The Guardian reiterated that in March 2020, a Reuters report revealed how Facebook faced intense pressure from the Vietnamese government. State-run telecommunications companies have shut down Facebook's Vietnam-based servers. This slows down local traffic on Facebook.

As a result, Facebook began censoring content deemed "anti-state" in Vietnam, including content posted by activists like Pham Doan Trang.

Facebook emphasizes that the posts are not deleted but are "geo-blocked", meaning that users with a Vietnamese IP address cannot see them, but are still visible to users abroad.

## Pham Doan Trang: Publishing House was suppressed because he wanted to reveal people's knowledge and tell the truth

### Ms. Pham Doan Trang won the Press Freedom Award 2019

But the article in The Guardian claims that geo-blocking not only affects important posts, but also affects individual accounts.

The example given is Bui Van Thuan, a Vietnamese Facebook user with tens of thousands of followers. On January 8, after Thuan posted content critical of the government, he received a notice from Facebook that "due to a legal requirement" in Vietnam, his account would be "restricted from access".

In the weeks leading up to the interview with The Guardian, Thuan publicly wrote on Facebook about the conflict over land rights in Dong Tam. More specifically, he predicted an imminent crackdown. Two days later, about 3,000 policemen raided Dong Tam village at dawn and in clashes with villagers, three policemen and Mr. Le Dinh Kinh - the village's spiritual leader - were killed.

Just eight months after the clash, the murder trial delivered a verdict. Two brothers, his son Le Dinh Kinh was sentenced to death. Thuan's Facebook account remained restricted all the time and was only unlocked a few days after the trial ended.

Carl Thayer, professor emeritus at the University of New South Wales Canberra, an expert on Southeast Asia, told The Guardian that since Vietnam started implementing the Cybersecurity Law in 2019 there has been "a clear increase" marked the arrest and trial of Vietnamese who expressed their views on a number of social issues, especially corruption and the environment, on social networks".

"Most of the arrests are indirectly related to the upcoming national congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam [in January]," Professor Carl Thayer was quoted as saying by The Guardian.

"In other words," said Carl Thayer, "the arrests are part of a process that continues to quell disagreements on sensitive social issues and prevent others from following suit. Arrests will spike in the coming months as the congress draws near."

**Update: On October 18, 2021, the Hanoi People's Procuracy issued an indictment against Ms. Pham Thi Doan Trang for "conducting propaganda against the State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, as stipulated in article 88 of the Penal Code 1999". According to Vietnamese newspapers on the same day, the indictment was transferred to the Hanoi People's Court. The trial is expected to be opened on November 4, presided over by Judge Chu Phuong Ngoc.**

---